UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

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09/760,730	01/17/2001	Yoshihiro Masuda	108359	4837

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EXAMINER
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ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
3623	

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Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

PTO-90C (Rev. 10/03)

	Application No.	Applicant(s)
Office Action Summary	09/760,730	MASUDA ET AL.
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	Susanna M. Diaz	3623	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE _3_ MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.
- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1)☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on _05 January 2006_.

2a)☒ This action is **FINAL.**   2b)☐ This action is non-final.

3)☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4)☒ Claim(s) _1-4,6-11 and 13-18_ is/are pending in the application.

    4a) Of the above claim(s) _2_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6)☒ Claim(s) _1,3,4,6-11 and 13-17_ is/are rejected.

7)☒ Claim(s) _18_ is/are objected to.

8)☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9)☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10)☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a)☐ accepted or b)☐ objected to by the Examiner.

    Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

    Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11)☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12)☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

    a)☒ All   b)☐ Some * c)☐ None of:

      1.☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

      2.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.

      3.☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

    * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1)☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)

2)☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)

3)☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
    Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.

4)☒ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
    Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _03162006_ .

5)☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)

6)☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

1.   This final Office action is responsive to Applicant's amendment filed January 5,

2006.

Claims 1-4, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 13 have been amended.

Claims 17 and 18 have been added.

Claim 2 stands as withdrawn.

Claims 1, 3, 4, 6-11, and 13-18 are presented for examination.

2.   The rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112 have been withdrawn in response to

Applicant's amendments.

Response to Arguments

3.   Applicant's arguments filed January 5, 2006 have been fully considered but they

are not persuasive.

Applicant argues that selection of a printer is not equivalent to the selection of a

task (page 10 of Applicant's response). However, for each job in Stuart, a set of

required tasks is identified (see at least col. 6, lines 1-6, which teaches that each print

job has a specific set of requirements and Fig. 6 shows a table that identifies the various

work processes, including tasks, through which each print job passes), i.e., executive

elements (e.g., print jobs) are classified into processible tasks and managed. Then, a

device that can handle each required task is assigned as needed (col. 6, lines 3-5,

which states that specific devices can be called upon for a given print job), i.e., a

candidate executive element that can process each of the tasks based on the

classification (e.g., task and/or device that can perform the required task) is selected.

The printers are tied to certain types of printing activities, especially those types of

activities that can only be completed by a certain subset of available printers.

Therefore, by selecting the appropriate printer for a given activity, it is understood that

the activity to be assigned to the printer is effectively selected as well. Furthermore, the

mere allocation of activities implies a selection of each activity as part of the assignment

process.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

4.   The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that

form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

> A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –
>
> (e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

5.   Claims 1, 3, 4, 6-11, and 13-17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being

anticipated by Stuart (U.S. Patent No. 6,466,935).

        Stuart discloses an element organization support apparatus for selecting, for a

project including plural tasks, executive elements for individual tasks and supporting

organization of the plural executive elements, the apparatus comprising:

[Claim 1]   a control unit that:

classifies executive elements that indicate activities to carry out a task into

processible tasks and manages the classified executive elements (Fig. 6; col. 4, lines

56-63; col. 6, lines 1-14 -- For example, for each job, a set of required tasks is identified

(see at least col. 6, lines 1-6, which teaches that each print job has a specific set of

requirements and Fig. 6 shows a table that identifies the various work processes,

including tasks, through which each print job passes), i.e., executive elements (e.g.,

print jobs) are classified into processible tasks and managed. Then, a device that can

handle each required task is assigned as needed (col. 6, lines 3-5, which states that

specific devices can be called upon for a given print job), i.e., a candidate executive

element that can process each of the tasks based on the classification (e.g., task and/or

device that can perform the required task) is selected); and

selects a candidate executive element that can process a task of a project that

includes plural tasks, the selecting being based on the classification (col. 6, lines 1-14,

22-45, 64-67 -- For example, for each job, a set of required tasks is identified (see at

least col. 6, lines 1-6, which teaches that each print job has a specific set of

requirements and Fig. 6 shows a table that identifies the various work processes,

including tasks, through which each print job passes), i.e., executive elements (e.g.,

print jobs) are classified into processible tasks and managed. Then, a device that can

handle each required task is assigned as needed (col. 6, lines 3-5, which states that

specific devices can be called upon for a given print job), i.e., a candidate executive

element that can process each of the tasks based on the classification (e.g., task and/or

device that can perform the required task) is selected);

[Claim 3]   further comprising a memory for storing at least element information that identifies a task processible by each executive element, and the control unit selects, on the basis of the element information, the candidate executive element for processing each task required in the project (Fig. 6; col. 6, lines 1-14, 22-45; col. 7, lines 57-65);

[Claim 4]   wherein the element information further includes data regarding processing time, and the control unit, when there are plural candidate executive elements for a given task, rearranges the plural candidate executive elements according to the processing time and presents the candidate executive elements (col. 6, lines 1-14; col. 11, lines 3-24);

[Claim 14]   wherein each one of the classified executive elements identifies an activity which is stored as an identifier in a database (For each job, a set of required tasks is identified (see at least col. 6, lines 1-6, which teaches that each print job has a specific set of requirements and Fig. 6 shows a table that identifies the various work processes, including tasks, through which each print job passes), i.e., executive elements (e.g., print jobs) are classified into processible tasks and managed. Then, a device that can handle each required task is assigned as needed (col. 6, lines 3-5, which states that specific devices can be called upon for a given print job), i.e., a candidate executive element that can process each of the tasks based on the classification (e.g., task and/or device that can perform the required task) is selected. Fig. 6 and col. 6, lines 1-6 show identifiers for various activities);

[Claim 15]   wherein the candidate executive element is selected based on at least one of an operation name and an operation subject name of the classification (col. 6, lines 1-

14, 22-45, 64-67 -- For example, for each job, a set of required tasks is identified by

name and type);

[Claim 16]   wherein each one of the processible tasks is represented by a name of

operation (For each job, a set of required tasks is identified (see at least col. 6, lines 1-

6, which teaches that each print job has a specific set of requirements and Fig. 6 shows

a table that identifies the various work processes, including tasks, through which each

print job passes), i.e., executive elements (e.g., print jobs) are classified into processible

tasks and managed. Then, a device that can handle each required task is assigned as

needed (col. 6, lines 3-5, which states that specific devices can be called upon for a

given print job), i.e., a candidate executive element that can process each of the tasks

based on the classification (e.g., task and/or device that can perform the required task)

is selected. Fig. 6 and col. 6, lines 1-6 show the names of various tasks)

[Claim 17]   further comprising a thesaurus database that stores concepts of operation

names representing processible tasks (col. 6, lines 1-14, 22-45, 64-67 -- For example,

for each job, a set of required tasks is identified by name and type. It should be noted

that the "thesaurus database" is merely recited as storing data; therefore, the adjective

"thesaurus" is interpreted as a mere label applied to the database where the operation

names happen to be stored).

Stuart discloses an element organization support apparatus for selecting, for use

in the accomplishment of a job asking by a customer, an executive element that

indicates an activity to carry out a task involved in the job, and supporting organization

of the plural executive elements to accomplish the job, comprising:

[Claim 6]   a control unit that:

classifies executive elements into processible tasks and manages the classified

executive elements (Fig. 6; col. 4, lines 56-63; col. 6, lines 1-14 -- For example, for each

job, a set of required tasks is identified (see at least col. 6, lines 1-6, which teaches that

each print job has a specific set of requirements and Fig. 6 shows a table that identifies

the various work processes, including tasks, through which each print job passes), i.e.,

executive elements (e.g., print jobs) are classified into processible tasks and managed.

Then, a device that can handle each required task is assigned as needed (col. 6, lines

3-5, which states that specific devices can be called upon for a given print job), i.e., a

candidate executive element that can process each of the tasks based on the

classification (e.g., task and/or device that can perform the required task) is selected);

and

selects a candidate executive element that can process the task of the job, the

selecting being based on the classification (col. 6, lines 1-14, 22-45, 64-67 -- For

example, for each job, a set of required tasks is identified (see at least col. 6, lines 1-6,

which teaches that each print job has a specific set of requirements and Fig. 6 shows a

table that identifies the various work processes, including tasks, through which each

print job passes), i.e., executive elements (e.g., print jobs) are classified into processible

tasks and managed. Then, a device that can handle each required task is assigned as

needed (col. 6, lines 3-5, which states that specific devices can be called upon for a

given print job), i.e., a candidate executive element that can process each of the tasks

based on the classification (e.g., task and/or device that can perform the required task)

is selected).

Stuart discloses a service providing method comprising:

[Claim 7]   classifying plural executive elements that indicate activities to carry out a

task constituting various services into processible tasks in advance and managing the

classified executive elements, each of the executive elements including at least one of

human and physical elements (Fig. 6; col. 4, lines 56-63; col. 6, lines 1-14 -- For

example, for each job, a set of required tasks is identified (see at least col. 6, lines 1-6,

which teaches that each print job has a specific set of requirements and Fig. 6 shows a

table that identifies the various work processes, including tasks, through which each

print job passes), i.e., executive elements (e.g., print jobs) are classified into processible

tasks and managed. Then, a device that can handle each required task is assigned as

needed (col. 6, lines 3-5, which states that specific devices can be called upon for a

given print job), i.e., a candidate executive element that can process each of the tasks

based on the classification (e.g., task and/or device that can perform the required task)

is selected);

receiving a request for organizing, for the accomplishment of a specific service

asked by a customer (Fig. 6; col. 4, lines 56-63; col. 6, lines 1-14);

analyzing, by a processor, as instructed by the customer, a task required for the

specific service (Fig. 6; col. 4, lines 56-63; col. 6, lines 1-14); and

selecting by a processor from the executive elements classified and managed,

on the basis of the result of the analysis, a candidate executive element for executing

the task required for the specific service, the selecting being based on the classification

(col. 6, lines 1-14, 22-45, 64-67 -- For example, for each job, a set of required tasks is

identified (see at least col. 6, lines 1-6, which teaches that each print job has a specific

set of requirements and Fig. 6 shows a table that identifies the various work processes,

including tasks, through which each print job passes), i.e., executive elements (e.g.,

print jobs) are classified into processible tasks and managed. Then, a device that can

handle each required task is assigned as needed (col. 6, lines 3-5, which states that

specific devices can be called upon for a given print job), i.e., a candidate executive

element that can process each of the tasks based on the classification (e.g., task and/or

device that can perform the required task) is selected);

[Claim 8]   allowing the customer to evaluate the result of the organization of the

executive elements (col. 6, lines 11-14 -- Penalties and incentives are assessed based

on an agreement with a customer. If the customer's needs are met, i.e., the customer is

satisfied that the conditions of the agreement are met, the printer is given an incentive.

Otherwise, if the customer's needs are not met, i.e., the customer is not satisfied that

the conditions of the agreement are met, then penalties are assessed against the

printer. This evaluation of whether or not conditions of the agreement have been met is

effectively a customer evaluation of the organization); and

receiving, as the organizer of the executive elements, the evaluation and holding

the evaluation in association with information concerning the organization of the

executive elements provided to the customer (col. 6, lines 11-14 -- Penalties and

incentives are assessed based on an agreement with a customer. If the customer's

needs are met, i.e., the customer is satisfied that the conditions of the agreement are

met, the printer is given an incentive. Otherwise, if the customer's needs are not met,

i.e., the customer is not satisfied that the conditions of the agreement are met, then

penalties are assessed against the printer. This evaluation of whether or not conditions

of the agreement have been met is effectively a customer evaluation of the

organization).

Stuart discloses an element organization support method executable by a

processor for selecting, for a project including plural tasks, executive elements that

indicate activities to carry out a task and supporting organization of the plural executive

elements, the method comprising:

[Claim 9]   classifying by the processor the executive elements into processible tasks

in advance and managing the classified executive elements (Fig. 6; col. 4, lines 56-63;

col. 6, lines 1-14 -- For example, for each job, a set of required tasks is identified (see at

least col. 6, lines 1-6, which teaches that each print job has a specific set of

requirements and Fig. 6 shows a table that identifies the various work processes,

including tasks, through which each print job passes), i.e., executive elements (e.g.,

print jobs) are classified into processible tasks and managed. Then, a device that can

handle each required task is assigned as needed (col. 6, lines 3-5, which states that

specific devices can be called upon for a given print job), i.e., a candidate executive

element that can process each of the tasks based on the classification (e.g., task and/or

device that can perform the required task) is selected); and

searching by the processor the executive elements classified and managed for a

candidate executive element to execute a task of a project that includes plural tasks and

selecting the candidate executive element from the executive elements classified and

managed that can process the task, the selecting being based on the classification (col.

6, lines 1-14, 22-45, 64-67 -- For example, for each job, a set of required tasks is

identified (see at least col. 6, lines 1-6, which teaches that each print job has a specific

set of requirements and Fig. 6 shows a table that identifies the various work processes,

including tasks, through which each print job passes), i.e., executive elements (e.g.,

print jobs) are classified into processible tasks and managed. Then, a device that can

handle each required task is assigned as needed (col. 6, lines 3-5, which states that

specific devices can be called upon for a given print job), i.e., a candidate executive

element that can process each of the tasks based on the classification (e.g., task and/or

device that can perform the required task) is selected).

Stuart discloses a computer-readable storage medium storing thereon a program

executable by a processor for selecting, for a project including plural tasks, executive

elements that indicate activities to carry out a task and thereby supporting organization

of the plural executive elements, the program comprising:

[Claim 10]   a first module for classifying the executive elements into processible tasks

in advance and managing the classified executive elements (Fig. 6; col. 4, lines 56-63;

col. 6, lines 1-14 -- For example, for each job, a set of required tasks is identified (see at

least col. 6, lines 1-6, which teaches that each print job has a specific set of

requirements and Fig. 6 shows a table that identifies the various work processes,

including tasks, through which each print job passes), i.e., executive elements (e.g.,

print jobs) are classified into processible tasks and managed. Then, a device that can

handle each required task is assigned as needed (col. 6, lines 3-5, which states that

specific devices can be called upon for a given print job), i.e., a candidate executive

element that can process each of the tasks based on the classification (e.g., task and/or

device that can perform the required task) is selected); and

a second module for searching the executive elements classified and managed

for a candidate executive element that can process a task of a project that includes

plural tasks and selecting the candidate executive element from the executive elements

classified and managed, the selecting being based on the classification (col. 6, lines 1-

14, 22-45, 64-67 -- For example, for each job, a set of required tasks is identified (see at

least col. 6, lines 1-6, which teaches that each print job has a specific set of

requirements and Fig. 6 shows a table that identifies the various work processes,

including tasks, through which each print job passes), i.e., executive elements (e.g.,

print jobs) are classified into processible tasks and managed. Then, a device that can

handle each required task is assigned as needed (col. 6, lines 3-5, which states that

specific devices can be called upon for a given print job), i.e., a candidate executive

element that can process each of the tasks based on the classification (e.g., task and/or

device that can perform the required task) is selected);

[Claim 11]   wherein the first module calls a program performing the classification and

management of the executive elements, and the second module calls a program

searching for and selecting the executive element (col. 6, lines 1-14, 22-45, 64-67; col.

10, line 35 through col. 11, line 34).

Stuart discloses an element organization support system, comprising:

[Claim 13]   a database server for classifying data pieces regarding plural executive

elements that indicate activities to carry out a task constituting various services into

processible tasks, and managing the executive elements, the data pieces regarding

executive elements including at least one of human and physical elements (Fig. 6; col.

4, lines 56-63; col. 6, lines 1-14 -- For example, for each job, a set of required tasks is

identified (see at least col. 6, lines 1-6, which teaches that each print job has a specific

set of requirements and Fig. 6 shows a table that identifies the various work processes,

including tasks, through which each print job passes), i.e., executive elements (e.g.,

print jobs) are classified into processible tasks and managed. Then, a device that can

handle each required task is assigned as needed (col. 6, lines 3-5, which states that

specific devices can be called upon for a given print job), i.e., a candidate executive

element that can process each of the tasks based on the classification (e.g., task and/or

device that can perform the required task) is selected);

a reception server for receiving a request for preparation of organization of

executive elements for processing a specific service asked by a customer (Fig. 6; col. 4,

lines 56-63; col. 6, lines 1-14); and

an analysis server for analyzing a task required for the specific service as

instructed by the customer (Fig. 6; col. 4, lines 56-63; col. 6, lines 1-14), and selecting

from the database server, on the basis of the result of the analysis, a data piece

regarding a candidate executive element for executing the task required for the specific

service, the selecting being based on the classification (col. 6, lines 1-14, 22-45, 64-67).

Allowable Subject Matter

6.   Claim 18 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but

would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the

base claim and any intervening claims.

7.   The following is a statement of reasons for the indication of allowable subject

matter:

Stuart (U.S. Patent No. 6,466,935) addresses the recited limitations regarding

the breakdown of project tasks into basic elements required to perform each project

task, wherein each element has a corresponding operation name. However, Stuart

does not disclose the use of a thesaurus database, wherein the control unit searches

the operation names in the thesaurus database and checks whether any of the

operation names in the thesaurus database matches a request for searching the

classified executive element by operation name and when a match is found, the control

unit recursively executes another search using the operation name found in the

thesaurus database. Harel (U.S. Patent No. 6,064,381) is directed toward identifying

human difficulties with using a computerized system. The user can identify intended tasks to be performed. The system can infer which tasks the user was trying to complete and make suggestions as to the inferred tasks; however, Harel does not teach or suggest use of an actual thesaurus database to check whether any of the operation names in the thesaurus database match a request for searching a classified executive element by operation name and, when a match is found, to recursively execute another search using the operation name found in the thesaurus database. Davis et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,757,692) discusses the use of synonym tables with thesauri, yet these synonymous tables are not used in a workflow context as recited in the claimed invention. The prior art is not seen to disclose or suggest the use of a thesaurus database, wherein the control unit searches the operation names in the thesaurus database and checks whether any of the operation names in the thesaurus database matches a request for searching the classified executive element by operation name and when a match is found, the control unit recursively executes another search using the operation name found in the thesaurus database in the recited workflow environment set forth in claim 18; therefore, claim 18 is deemed to be allowable over the prior art of record.

Conclusion

8.   The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

Hakozaki et al. (JP 2002-99564 A) -- Discloses a synonym table for use in various industries.

9.   Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

10.   Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Susanna M. Diaz whose telephone number is (571) 272-6733. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday, 10 am - 6 pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tariq Hafiz can be reached on (571) 272-6729. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the

Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for

published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR.

Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only.

For more information about the PAIR system, see http://pair-direct.uspto.gov. Should

you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic

Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Susanna M. Diaz
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3623

March 16, 2006